In view of the above remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

Masamichi NAKASHIBA et al.

By:

Nils E. Pedersen

Registration No. 33,145 Attorney for Applicants

NEP/pth Washington, D.C. 20006-1021 Telephone (202) 721-8200 Facsimile (202) 721-8250 January 5, 2004